

JUST A MINUTE (OR JAM): A JOYOUS COMMUNICATION ENHANCEMENT GAME

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with a simple communication game called Just a Minute. It is based on the class room experience and aims to provide an insight of how JAM could be instrumental in enhancing the communication skill of the Students. The objective of the game is to make participants to talk for sixty seconds on a given subject, without repetition, hesitation or deviation. The flavor of the game comes from attempts to keep within these rules and the banter among the participants. It is a simple tool which could be employed by teachers of all levels for encouraging listening skills, for collaborative play and for development of vocabulary. When the conventional language teaching is supplemented with interesting games like Jam, the results are quite fruitful by way of increasing the class participation and skill development.

KEYWORDS: *Class Room Experience, Listening Skills, Skill Development*

Received: Dec 28, 2015; **Accepted:** Jan 05, 2016; **Published:** Jan 28, 2016; **Paper Id.:** IJCMSFEB20162

INTRODUCTION

The students of Post Graduate Management education, though they fare well in their communication, there are certain aspects like initiative, clarity and fluency, where they need a lot of practice. The role of the faculty here is to be a good facilitator in their journey towards learning and guiding them when required. The aim of the weekly communication class was to enable the smooth transition from hesitant and unwilling speakers to confident and competent speakers for the betterment of their future. Various games and strategies were employed in the classroom to fine-tune their language skills. A cornucopia of activities like Debate, Role play, Mock parliament, Word games, Quiz, Group discussions, Mock Interviews, Article Reviews and other strategies were employed in the weekly Communication Hour. One such game is Just a minute (or JAM) which is all about the control of the mind over the mouth.

The Gist of the JAM Game

The JAM game discussed in this article is a classroom version of the radio show called "Just a Minute", a BBC Radio 4 radio comedy and television panel game chaired by Nicholas Parsons. The game starts with the initial participant who has to speak on the given topic for the agreed length of time (one minute, usually). The catch is that the rest of the class can challenge the speaker (putting up their hand and being selected by the JAM Master), and take the topic from them, for any of the following reasons:

- Hesitation - the easiest challenge awarded if the speaker uses gap fillers and indulges in time-wasting tactics.

- Repetition - the speaker is not allowed to repeat any words or phrases which are not contained in the topic title itself, although obviously pronouns, prepositions etc can be repeated. The students could soon imbibe this idea and can get very good at adapting their words to avoid repetition.
- Deviation - a challenge can be lodged if the speaker goes off the given topic.

The Role of the JAM Master Could be Taken by the Teacher or a Competent Student Volunteer. Points are given in the Following Manner:

- Positive points for every second that you speak
- Positive points for every correct objection
- Negative points for every incorrect objection
- Bonus points for being the last speaker

The winner is the person with the maximum number of points at the end of the round. The rules of the game could always be customized to suit the needs of the class depending on their language competency.

The Benefits of the JAM Game

The students with good communication skills could use this practice to increase the creativity. The choice of words, context, humor content, flow and style decides the level of creativity. In order to avoid repetition, the student definitely reaches for new words, thus enhancing the vocabulary. One of the other challenges is overcoming hesitation. Most of the students use fillers like ums, aahs, that is, nothing but, etc. The student is made aware of these shortcomings which he unconsciously uses in his everyday language. This helps in refining the language further.

When JAM is used for context specific topics, especially for students of Engineering and Management discipline, their subject knowledge is put to a test. This helps them to widen their subject exposure. Apart from the speaker, the rest of the class can challenge the speaker. The banter among the students adds more flare to the game. Everyone in the class is ready to pounce on the speaker, in an instant, on grounds of repetition, hesitation and deviation. Sometimes this sheer pressure makes the speaker to crumble and the confident students make it through the sixty minutes.

The initial Jam games may not be quite successful. Once the students practice enough on impromptu speaking, prior to classes, the improvement could be visibly noticed in their confidence level, language flow, organization of speech and even their body language. Through this game, each student is able to identify his shortcoming in the language usage. Some of the common problems are: Early start and late start, speaking too fast or too slow, grammatical errors and repetition of a previously used idea, words, and phrases.

CONCLUSIONS

As mentioned earlier, there are no hard and fast rules for this JAM game. The teacher could improvise the game by extending the time limit, giving hilarious topics, bonus points for new words, making it into a team activity, etc. Each student, through this game is given an opportunity to practice their skills. From these exercises, they are able to develop at their own pace. As this game is designed as an all round fun activity, they enjoy the learning experience and also identify their problems. They work over the problems individually as well as in groups. Over a period of time, they become competent speakers.

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